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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews approaches for making bibliographic instruction accessible to college students with visual, hearing, and mobility impairments. Needs assessment should focus on students, library staff, administrative officers, faculty members, and educational specialists. Consideration in program development should be given not only to special programs but also to modifying existing programs. Suggestions for library orientation approaches are offered for blind, hearing impaired, and physically disabled students. Examples of successful bibliographic instruction employing video formats and emphasis on term paper counseling are cited. The importance of evaluating the programs and using results to improve instruction is stressed. (CL)

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

FOR

DISABLED STUDENTS

by

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Conference on Academic Library Services

to Disabled Students

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The Florida State University

School of Library and Information Studies

Tallahassee, Florida

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION FOR DISABLED STUDENTS

Accessibility is widely accepted by librarians as a primary determinant of library use. Applying this axiom to the disabled population, physical barriers and material formats are readily identified as deterrents of use. Although improperly designed architecture and unusable materials do impede disabled persons, unavailable or inaccessible bibliographic instruction is another obstacle for the disabled student, who may have had limited exposure to library resources and services.

The rationale for providing bibliographic instruction to disabled students is both legal and professional. Because many students enter college with minimal experience in library use, bibliographic instruction has become a mission of numerous academic libraries. The majority of these libraries are obligated by law to provide disabled students with programs equivalent to those afforded to other students. Section 504 of the 1973 Federal Rehabilitation Act mandates that "no qualified handicapped person, shall. . . , be denied the benefits of or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program of activity

which receives or benefits from federal financial assistance." In addition to the legal responsibility, librarians have a professional responsibility, which is implied in the Library Bill of Rights, to meet the informational needs of the disabled patron in a nondiscriminatory fashion (Begg, 1979). A recent survey of southeastern academic librarians (Jahoda & Faustini, 1983) indicates that 75% of the 109 respondents acknowledge that the academic library should provide library use instruction to disabled students. However, only 61% of the respondents indicated that bibliographic instruction for these patrons is available through their academic library.

A review of the literature of library service to the disabled population suggests that bibliographic instruction receives limited attention. Of the more than 40 academic libraries of metropolitan New York listed in Library Access for the Handicapped (New York Metropolitan Reference and Research Agency, 1979), two indicate that special library orientations are available to disabled students. These numbers may or may not reflect the actual availability of such programs, but they do indicate that bibliographic instruction for disabled persons may receive low priority in many academic libraries.

Today I would like to review what is being done in bibliographic instruction for visually, hearing and

mobility impaired students and to consider what can be done to make such programs more accessible and useful. Although staff awareness and training are necessary precursors to successful bibliographic instruction programs, I am omitting both since these topics will be treated later during the conference.

Prior to planning any bibliographic instruction program, user needs should be assessed. To determine the needs of academic library users who are disabled, consult:

- disabled students,
- administrative officers who assist these students,
- library staff who can identify problems which disabled students have in library use,
- faculty who can indicate the types of library use required for class assignments and
- educational specialists who can suggest instructional strategies.

Information from these groups may be obtained through interviews, questionnaires, informal discussions, and observation. A needs assessment for bibliographic instruction should identify the disabled constituency and their informational needs, the number and types of disabilities, the instructional methods preferred by disabled students, and what library skills are needed.

In developing bibliographic instruction programs for disabled students, consideration should be given not only to special programs but also to modification of existing programs. Francesca Anstine notes that "[i]magination, practicality, and cooperative effort with disabled persons are of primary importance when examining the library instruction needs of the disabled patron" (1981, p. 535). The disability may affect the method of instruction; but with creativity some programs, which are designed for the general student audience, may be adapted for use by disabled students. Anstine (1981) suggests that slide/tape programs may be made accessible to the deaf by script booklets with key slides duplicated for easy reference or by captioned transparencies projected simultaneously with the slides. Another adaptation could be done by producing slides with captions and synchronizing the illustrative slide with the captioned slide for presentation. Whenever possible, disabled students should be mainstreamed in bibliographic instruction; however, on occasion their needs may require special instruction.

Library orientation is perhaps the most prevalent form of special bibliographic instruction. Through orientation the disabled person may become familiar with library procedures and physical arrangement. The special orientation can be effectively used to inform disabled

students of library services which are tailored for their needs, to introduce students to reference and public service librarians, to explain emergency exit procedures and to provide visual, tactile, and auditory explanations suitable for a given disability. Surveys of visually impaired students by Parkin (1975) at Brigham Young University and by Major (1978) at Ohio State University resulted in recommendations for providing special orientation tours for blind and partially sighted students at these universities. Margaret Cheeseman (1977) suggests techniques to use when conducting an orientation tour for a blind patron:

1. Ask the blind person to take your arm. Never take the patron's arm and propel him or her by the elbow. For the patron to locate your arm, touch your elbow to his or her arm.

2. Walk half a pace ahead of the patron. This position allows him or her to anticipate your movement.

3. Indicate to the person when you are approaching steps or other surfaces, such as inclines or book stacks.

4. Precede the patron when maneuvering in narrow places. Do not attempt to direct the blind person from the rear.

5. Use specific terms such as "right" or "left" in giving directions. Avoid expressions such as "over there" or "right here."

6. Describe the location of furniture and equipment and mention moveable items such as book trucks and kick-stools.

To Cheeseman's suggestions, I would add:

7. Create verbal images of key areas in the library--the circulation desk, the reference desk, study rooms, restrooms, and stairwells.

8. Inform the patron of the availability and location of reading aids--tape recorders, magnifiers, closed circuit television readers, etc. Use the orientation tour to advertise the library's services.

9. Supplement the tour with a user guide in braille or on audio tape.

The orientation of blind students may be enhanced by braille or tactile maps of the library. As pointed out in the preceding presentation of the results of the user needs survey done at The Florida State University, the partially sighted student can benefit from signs with large letters in contrasting colors placed at eye level.

Cheeseman (1977) also offers suggestions to improve communication with the hearing impaired patrons, which would be useful in library orientation:

1. Fact the hearing impaired person and have his or her attention before you speak.

2. Speak distinctly but do not exaggerate lip movement. The lip reader is accustomed to normal lip motion.

3. Keep in the light and out of shadows when you speak. Any obstruction of your face will affect the message received by the hearing impaired person.

For the mobility impaired, the orientation librarian should point out barrier free access routes, the location of specially-equipped restrooms and study carrels, and the availability of retrieval, photocopying or other services.

Another approach to orientation is the user guide, which generally describes architectural accessibility, special facilities and equipment and special services. For the disabled students who prefer a standard orientation tour, the user guide can supplement the tour with information that students need to know. Because they can be distributed through sources other than the library, user guides promote library services to potential users. To insure that all disabled students have access to it, the user guide would ideally be available in standard print, large print, braille, and audio tape. However, access would be greatly increased by providing audio tape in addition to a standard print guide. If you are interested in producing a user guide for disabled persons, five such guides are reproduced in SPEC Kit 81, Services to the Disabled in ARL Libraries (1982).

Two bibliographic instruction programs developed for the hearing impaired have been reported in the literature. In 1977, Goss (1978) interviewed 39 hearing impaired students at St. Petersburg Junior College and determined that 59% of these students would like video taped instruction. Goss then developed a 45-minute video which identified areas in the library and provided instruction in the use of the card catalog, periodical indexes, and literary indexes. Although the video instruction was used by the hearing impaired students, Goss did not evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction.

With funds provided by a LSCA grant, Anstine (1981), and others at the University of Illinois developed a captioned video tape suitable for hearing and hearing impaired students. Because the intended audience was college students, the script was captioned verbatim. Although the captions move rapidly, Anstine did not consider the verbatim captioning a problem.

Other instructional methods may be adapted for use by disabled persons. Schobert (1982), the orientation librarian at the University of Ottawa, recently reported in RQ the success of a program of term paper counseling (TPC). This instructional format appears to be well suited for use by any student including the disabled. In pre-counseling interviews, the student, with the aid of a

librarian, completes a form which identifies the scope of the term paper, sources already consulted by the student and library skills that the student may need to review. During individual counseling sessions, students are told what indexes, bibliographies and reference sources will be useful in researching their topics. They may be given pathfinders and instructed in the use of applicable indexes. If a student does not know how to locate subject headings in the card catalog or in indexes, that information is provided. While an immediate need is being met by TPC, through transfer of learning, students may become more effective library users.

According to a survey by Metz and Kenney (1982), the most common form of bibliographic instruction is the use of regular class time for instruction related to an assignment requiring library use. In making such presentations, librarians should be prepared to teach classes which contain disabled and nondisabled students. An instruction librarian should be familiar with the U.S. government publication, The College Student with a Disability: A College Handbook (Smith, 1980), which explains accommodations and equipment that facilitates the learning of disabled students. Another source published by the State University of New York at Buffalo, Everything You Wanted to Know About Handicapped Students (And Were Not Afraid to Ask) (Wilkinson,

1981) is a practical primer on teaching strategies. Concerning the use of visual aids with hearing impaired persons, the pamphlet recommends that the instructor pause for several moments so the student can look at the visual material without losing the verbal explanation. With visually impaired students, instructors are advised to use the chalkboard and other visuals as one normally would. However, specific oral descriptions of such materials should be given. The hearing impaired student may need to see both the instructor and the interpreter, but the interpreter should be positioned so as not to distract other students. Although the pamphlet does note that beards impede the lip reader, it does not offer a solution. (Perhaps all problems are not solvable.) Equipped with suitable teaching strategies, the librarian in the classroom will not be disarmed by the presence of disabled students.

The possible formats of bibliographic instruction for disabled students have, by no means, been exhausted. But any discussion of bibliographic instruction would be incomplete without mention of evaluation. Instruction which has been based on user needs can be improved through both formal and informal evaluation. During the planning of a bibliographic instruction program, consider how it will be evaluated to verify its validity. The results of

evaluation can encourage continued administrative and financial support of bibliographic instruction for disabled students.

To summarize the recommendations and suggestions for implementing bibliographic instruction for disabled students:

1. Do a user needs assessment before planning bibliographic instruction.

2. Involve disabled students in needs assessment.

3. Develop bibliographic instruction based on student needs.

4. Provide special bibliographic instruction when necessary.

5. Modify existing bibliographic instruction for mainstreaming students.

6. Prepare to teach disabled students in the classroom setting.

7. Evaluate bibliographic instruction programs and use the results to improve instruction.

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